

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE C-13

NEW YORK TIMES
21 MARCH 1983

Books of The Times

By Walter Goodman

OF POWER AND PRINCIPLE. *Memoirs of the National Security Adviser. 1977-81.* By Zbigniew Brzezinski. 587 pages. Farrar Straus & Giroux. \$22.50.

FATED to follow, if not to fill, the footsteps of Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski has delivered his memoirs of his service as National Security Adviser to Jimmy Carter. Just as his career has been less grand than Mr. Kissinger's, so is his prose less magisterial. Where Mr. Kissinger was eloquent, Mr. Brzezinski is earnest. The stiffness of his detailed accounts of the major foreign-policy episodes in which he played a part is not relieved by extensive reliance on a journal he kept during his time in office, perhaps with this very use in mind. It is as spontaneous as a term paper.

But if "Of Power and Principle" offers few amenities of style, it does help us to assess, sometimes despite the author's loyal intentions, the Carter Administration's reputation for disarray in foreign policy. Not that the Administration was without its accomplishments: the Panama Canal Treaty, improved relations with China, greater attention to human rights and, pre-eminently, the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel. Mr. Brzezinski adds to our appreciation of the labor that went into such efforts.

But then there were the embarrassments, attributable partly to bad luck, partly to uncontrollable events and, in considerable part, to something about the nature of the Carter team: the failure to have the SALT II treaty ratified; the start and stop responses to Soviet adventures in Africa and Afghanistan and empty fulminations over that Soviet brigade in Cuba; the turnabouts on the neutron bomb, on Soviet participation in the Middle East settlement, on the United Nations resolution involving Jerusalem, and, finally, the inability to contain or even influence, except for the worse, the revolution in Iran.

The public sense that confusion was a hallmark of that administration is pretty well confirmed by this book. Mr. Brzezinski found Secretary of Defense Harold S. Brown an uncertain ally, Vice President Mondale overconcerned about the domestic repercussions of any show of harshness toward Israel and Stansfield Turner's Central Intelligence Agency uninformative at critical moments. Although he ex-

presses pro forma admiration even for these colleagues, the President alone is treated reverently throughout. No chapter lacks its passage of praise for some remarkable quality of Jimmy Carter. Moreover, like an old performer digging out his press releases, Mr. Brzezinski quotes every scrap of compliment that the President ever threw his way on a ceremonial occasion. After a while, this courtierlike performance provides a laugh or two in a book that is not rich in wit. (The quality of humor around the White House, which seems to have consisted mainly of jokes involving animals and children, is appalling. The one good joke in the book we owe to China's Deng Xiaoping, a reply to Mr. Carter's request for eased emigration from China: "Fine. We'll let them go. Are you prepared to accept 10 million?")

The most interesting chapters here have to do with Washington's handling, if that is the word, of the Iranian crisis. Entirely unprepared for the force or pace of the events that led to the overthrow of the Shah and the ascendance of the Ayatollah Khomeini, our baffled leaders went into paroxysms of paralysis. The Iranian eruption exposed dramatically the deep division between Mr. Brzezinski and Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance. While the National Security Adviser argued for a military coup in defense of the Shah or, at any rate, of a relatively moderate regime, Mr. Vance "simply played for time always arguing that the next concession to the Shah's opponents was less dangerous than the difficult and dangerous decision for Washington to stage a coup." If Mr. Brzezinski felt lonely in calling for a coup, Mr. Vance was alone in opposing the attempt to rescue the American hostages. When that ended in fiasco, by the peculiar logic of Washington politics, it was Mr. Vance who resigned.

Mr. Brzezinski defines their differences in terms of power and its uses: "For me the highest form of attainment is to combine talk with action, and I believe that power should be a means for attaining morally desirable ends," he writes, and "when a choice between the two had to be made, between projecting U.S. power and enhancing human rights (as, for example, in Iran), I felt that power had to come first. Without credible American power, we would simply not be able either to protect our interests or to advance more humane goals."

Thus, the National Security Adviser wanted to send an aircraft carrier to the Indian Ocean to discourage the Soviet adventure, via its Cuban surrogate, in the Horn of Africa. When the Administration did nothing, he "thought seriously about the possibility of resigning." Whereas the Secretary of State hoped that a new SALT agreement would lead to a wider United States-Soviet accommodation, Mr. Brzezinski saw it as "an opportunity to halt or reduce the momentum of the Soviet military buildup." In a similar spirit, he viewed a strengthening of ties with Peking as a means of putting pressure on Moscow. In his view, détente with the Soviet Union had to be "reciprocal" and "comprehensive" — that is, "the Soviets could not have a free ride in some parts of the world while pursuing détente where it suited them."

For the response of Mr. Vance, portrayed here as a soft-hearted establishment gentleman, we must await his memoirs. Whatever the specific differences, however, it is almost inevitable that a National Security Adviser should find himself at odds with a Secretary of State. Competition is built into their fuzzily defined roles, and Mr. Carter does not seem to have had the special skills required to get the best out of this kind of situation.

But the Vance-Brzezinski dispute ran deeper than that. It reflected the inherent stresses of America's uncomfortable position as a world power, as we attempt to defend our old-fashioned interests involving some unsavory clients and at the same time uphold the cause of peace and freedom against adversaries of diverse shape and tactics. Even the present Administration, which tolerates no presence like that of Cyrus Vance on its premises, cannot escape that predicament, the underlying theme in "Of Power and Principle."